

## Michaud Works to Support Maine Airports

Friday, February 11 2011

Airports in Presque Isle and Bar Harbor among those at risk if EAS program is eliminated or severely cut

WASHINGTON, DC &ndash; Today, Congressman Mike Michaud sent a letter to leaders on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee urging them to preserve the Essential Air Service (EAS) program in the midst of reports that some on Capitol Hill are proposing to eliminate it or drastically reduce its funding. The EAS program provides subsidies to air carriers for providing service between selected small communities and hub airports. The program was originally established in 1978 as part of airline deregulation to ensure a minimum level of air service to smaller communities that might otherwise lose service because of economic factors.

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&ldquo;Airports serve as significant economic centers of communities and entire regions. Without them we&rsquo;d have an even tougher time promoting economic development and job creation, especially in our rural areas,&rdquo; said Michaud, a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. &ldquo;So when I hear that leaders in Washington want to eliminate or gut this program, my first reaction is to invite them to a place like Presque Isle so that they can see firsthand the effect its airport has on the community at large. I support updating the program to make it more efficient, but cutting it drastically or eliminating it would force airports in Maine to close their doors, dealing a significant blow to local economies around our state.&rdquo;

Currently, airports in Presque Isle, Bar Harbor, Rockland and Augusta receive support through the EAS program. Before sending his letter today, Michaud solicited advice from Maine airports that participate in the program.

Scott E Wardwell, the Airport Director for the City of Presque Isle said: &ldquo;With over 150 airports throughout the United States receiving a subsidy from the Essential Air Service (EAS) program, simply eliminating the program would have a devastating effect on businesses located in rural communities. In the global economy, businesses need to have access to convenient and dependable air service to compete on the world stage. In Maine, four of the six airports with passenger air service receive a subsidy. One of the four is a full three hours away from the next nearest airport.&rdquo;

M. Allison Navia, Airport Manager for the Hancock County &ndash; Bar Harbor Airport said: &ldquo;I would like to express my support for the Essential Air Service (EAS) Program, specifically at the Hancock County &ndash; Bar Harbor Airport (BHB) in Trenton, Maine.

&ldquo;The elimination of EAS would have a devastating effect on BHB, the local economy, and the surrounding community. Our massive summer tourism industry, that even President Obama took part in, would suffer the loss of air carrier service, effectively removing air travel as a mode of transportation to our area for the general public. During the winter months, many local businesses, including the Jackson Laboratory, that use our air service for their travel needs would be left without this option. Job losses would also result, hurting many people and their families in a time when the people of our country cannot afford to be jobless.

&ldquo;I would be in support of reworking the EAS Program to make it more efficient and effective. I am not, however, in support of pulling the rug out from under my airport and my community, leaving us all scrambling to pick up the pieces and struggling for a solution.&rdquo;

The full text of the letter Michaud sent today can be found below.

February 11, 2011

Dear Chairman Mica, Ranking Member Rahall, Chairman Petri and Ranking Member Costello:

As the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure continues to work on reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), I want to voice strong support for the Essential Air Service (EAS) program.

Eliminating or drastically reducing the EAS program would have a devastating effect on the economy of Maine&rsquo;s second congressional district. It provides communities in Maine, particularly in the state&rsquo;s most rural areas, a vital link to the rest of the country. Without EAS, families living in remote areas of the state would have fewer options when looking to travel beyond their communities. In addition, businesses would reconsider their decisions to locate to these rural and underdeveloped parts of the state that desperately need their economic contributions.

Throughout Maine, the benefits of EAS are clear. In Trenton, the Hancock County &ndash; Bar Harbor Airport provides a mode of travel to a wide range of businesses and is critical for the summer tourism industry. In Presque Isle, the Northern Maine Regional Airport serves individuals and businesses that would otherwise have to drive three to five hours to access air transportation. Without EAS, these airports would struggle to survive, and the economies of these areas would suffer.

Eliminating or reducing this crucial program would hurt these parts of Maine, as well as more than 150 communities throughout the country. I fully support making the changes necessary to ensure that EAS can continue in a fiscally responsible manner, but I strongly oppose making drastic cuts to the program. I am confident that the Committee can work together in a bipartisan manner to update the program and ensure that rural communities can continue to depend on EAS.

With warmest regards,

MICHAEL H. MIHAUD

Member of Congress

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